



BLM - ALASKA FRONTIERS

ISSUE 71 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999

Protecting the predators

The Bureau of Land Management recently invited nationally recognized raptor scientists from Alaska and the Lower 48 to a workshop on how to protect raptor populations on the Colville and other rivers in the northeastern planning area of the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska (NPR-A).

Based on years of experience with peregrine falcons, gyrfalcons, rough-legged hawks, and their habitat and food sources, the scientists considered how to reduce or prevent impacts to raptors from oil and gas exploration and development, and other related activities in the petroleum reserve.

BLM wildlife biologist Dave Yokel arranged the workshop and will publish the discussion. Workshop results will also be used in the interagency preparation of the Colville River Management Plan. For more information on the NPR-A planning area, visit the BLM-Alaska website at: <http://aurora.ak.blm.gov/npra>.

RAPS student strikes gold



Joe Kurak

RAPS student Johnnie Lyman pans for gold near the Koyukuk River last summer. Lyman helped BLM geologists search for minerals in the Koyukuk mining district in Alaska's Brooks Range. (story on page 2)

RAPS AND ROCKS

The helicopter circled overhead, its pilot on the lookout for bears as geologists searched the brushy slopes below for minerals. It was a day in the field in Alaska's Brooks Range where Resource Apprenticeship Program for Students (RAPS) intern Johnnie Lyman assisted BLM's Anchorage Mineral Resource Team (AMRT) to evaluate mineral resources of the Koyukuk

mining district.

Johnnie helped the team with all facets of field work including identifying rock and mineral samples, reading maps, and learning sample collection techniques.

A student at Service High School in Anchorage, Johnnie has a keen interest in geology, nurtured by encouragement from her earth science teacher Bjarne Holm. She has taken all the courses that Holm offers, including advanced geology.

There are few roads in the district so a helicopter was used to get to many of the field sites. This gave Johnnie a chance to see remote areas seldom visited by Alaskans. In the process she got to experience some of the downsides of field work — wet weather, mosquitoes, and tramping through steep, brushy country.

Johnnie says, "It would be almost impossible for me to do something like this on my own. I got to do a variety of things and got lots of exercise hiking around the hills. I learned quite a bit about mineral deposits, including how placer gold deposits form. I learned how to identify rocks, and before this experience I never knew that there were so many dif-



Joe Kurtak

Accompanied by mine owner Ed Armstrong and BLM team member John Clark, Johnnie Lyman and Emily Davenport examine an underground placer gold mine at Nolan Creek in the Koyukuk mining district.

ferent kinds of schist (rocks that easily split into layers) out there.”

“The geologists didn’t just tell me the answers to my questions, but pushed me to figure things out on my own,” Johnnie adds. “I learned a lot more that way. I would have to say that the people I worked with were one of my favorite parts of the experience. I would recommend the RAPS program to anyone who can get their hands on it. It does more than just set you in an office reading a book; it allows you to judge for yourself whether or not you like a particular field and everything that comes with it.”

Johnnie’s interest in both geology and the outdoors made her an asset. They made sure that she was a working member of the field team, doing just what they did. The result was a positive experience for both parties — she learned from the BLM team while helping them accomplish their mission.

Seeing the realities of field work first hand can help students make informed decisions about career directions. RAPS also gives them a chance to find out about the importance of responsible management of Alaska’s lands and natural resources, and allows resource professionals to show students what they know. And Johnnie kept the geologists on their toes by asking lots of questions.

She is currently president of the Service Geology Club and will graduate from high school this spring. Johnnie plans to pursue geologic studies in college next year.

—Joe Kurtak

The Resource
Apprenticeship Program
for Students (RAPS)
introduces young people
to careers in natural and
cultural resource
management.

RAPS students work side-by-side with professionals who mentor students’ about career and educational possibilities. Students can work for eight weeks during the summer field season. Field expenses are covered, plus the student receives a stipend while working.

RAPS positions are available at a variety of locations including urban, rural, villages, and remote camps. Students have the chance to receive one college-level academic credit and possibly a one-year tuition waiver (freshman only) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. To qualify, students must be an Alaskan resident, a high school junior or senior, or a college student not over 21 years of age, and have an interest in natural resource management or related fields.

To find out more
about RAPS, call:

907-271-3332 or toll
free in Alaska at: 888-
442-3063

or e-mail:

m1johnso@ak.blm.gov
or write:

RAPS Coordinator
222 W 7th Avenue, #13
Anchorage, AK 99513



BLM releases Squirrel River EIS

BLM ADVISES NO WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS DESIGNATION FOR THE SQUIRREL RIVER



The Bureau of Land Management in Fairbanks, Alaska, has released its final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Squirrel River Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study.

After listening to and considering public comment, BLM is recommending that the Squirrel River not be included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Bureau will make a final recommendation after the last round of public comment is received. The comment period will end 30 days after the notice is published in the Federal Register.

In the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, Congress asked the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability of the Squirrel River as a potential

addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. With the completion of the final EIS, the BLM is closer to finishing the suitability study for the Department of the Interior.

The 95-mile-long Squirrel River is in northwestern Alaska, approximately 50 air miles north of Kotzebue. Its beautiful, pristine waters flow into the Kobuk River at the village of Kiana.

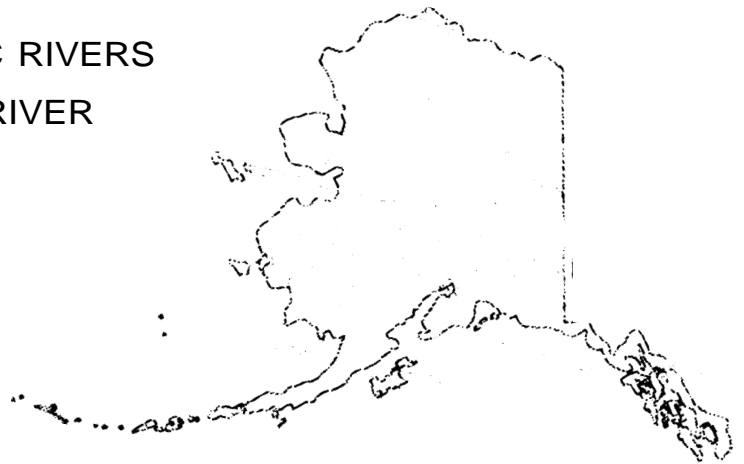
Information and concerns from local residents were gathered at several scoping meetings and hearings held in Kotzebue and Kiana. BLM consulted with others, including the state of Alaska, local and tribal governments, and the environmental community before examining designation alternatives ranging from extensive wild river corridors to no designation.

After analyzing potential threats to natural resources in the Squirrel River ba-

sin, and the likely effects of designations on the socioeconomic conditions in the region, BLM recommends that the river not be included in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

For printed copies of the EIS, call 1-800-437-7021 or 1-907-474-2200. Copies are also available on the Internet at: <http://aurora.ak.blm.gov/squirrel>.

Public comments are encouraged and must be sent by March 1, 1999, to: Squirrel River FEIS Comments; Northern Field Office, BLM-Alaska; 1150 University Avenue; Fairbanks, AK 99709-3899.





Interior designates new special management area

To protect fish and wildlife habitat, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt issued a public land order that withdrew from mineral entry a 37,579-acre parcel of BLM-managed public land 275 miles northwest of Fairbanks. Lake Todatonten, the central feature of a newly designated special management area, measures three-and-a-half-miles long and covers 3,500 acres. Waterfowl use the shallow lake for migration, molting and nesting. The lake and its surrounding hills are also home to moose, bear and furbearers. Residents of the nearby villages of Alatna, Allakaket, Hughes and Tanana use the area extensively for hunting, fishing, trapping and harvest of natural resources.

BLM will appoint a Lake Todatonten Special Management Area advisory committee and will hold committee meetings at least once a year to discuss management issues within the special area. The committee will consist of 11 members from the following groups: two residents each from the villages of Alatna, Allakaket, Hughes and Tanana; and one representative each from the Doyon



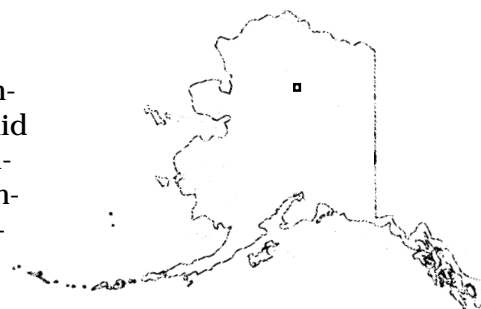
Corporation, the Tanana Chiefs Conference, and the state of Alaska.

Public Land Order 7372 withdraws the land, subject to all valid existing rights, from location, entry and patent under federal mining laws. BLM may permit additional uses of the area if such uses do not interfere with, or detract from, the purposes of the designation. For more information about the special management area visit the BLM web site at:

<http://aurora.ak.blm.gov/dalton/lake-t/> or call the BLM at:

1-907-474-2200.

—Sharon Wilson



Location of Lake Todatonten Special Management Area

Subsistence board closes caribou hunt

The Federal Subsistence Board closed winter caribou hunting on all federal lands in Subunit 20E and the portion of Subunit 25C east and south of the Steese Highway.

Federal lands affected by the December 3, 1998, closure are managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service. The closure affects the south unit of the Steese National Conservation Area, the Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River corridor, and the portion of Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve south of the Yukon River.

The hunt is administered by a state-federal registration permit, RC867, and the joint quota has now been reached. The state also closed the hunt by emergency order.

BLM extends comment period for proposed Oil and Gas Rule

The BLM is extending for 60 days the public comment period on a proposed comprehensive oil and gas rule. The original 120-day comment period would have ended on April 5; with the extension, the comment period will now end on **June 4, 1999**.

During the extension, the BLM will hold public workshops on the proposed rule in Bakersfield, California; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Billings, Montana; Washington, D. C.; and New Orleans, Louisiana. Dates and sites will be announced later.

The proposed rule, published on December 3, 1998 in the *Federal Register*, is aimed at reducing overlap among current BLM oil and gas regulations, giving operators greater flex-

ibility in meeting certain agency requirements, ensuring appropriate bond amounts to cover such costs as reclamation, and simplifying the classification of regulatory violations.

The complete text of the proposed rule is found on BLM's home page: <http://www.blm.gov>.

Pipeline ROW issued

In January BLM issued a grant of right-of-way for the Anchorage-to-Whittier natural gas pipeline. Enstar Natural Gas Company has leased the pipeline from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Since the pipeline crosses federal lands, the Mineral Leasing Act authorizes BLM to issue the right-of-way. The natural gas pipeline was formerly used by the military to transport jet fuels during the 1960s. The lease is subject to revocation if the military determines the pipeline is needed during a national emergency.

Correction

The last issue of *BLM-Alaska Frontiers* incorrectly listed a web site address in the *Mapping Veggies* story about vegetation studies. The correct URL is:
www.ak.blm.gov/ak930/shrubindx.html.

Gulkana River Study progresses

The Gulkana River Study team published its second newsletter about the BLM's planning study of the Gulkana River. This edition summarizes the issues, concerns, and special values identified by river users and managers during the fall of 1998, and states opportunities for public participation. A second set of public meetings takes place in early March at the following locations:

Fairbanks - Monday, March 8

Noel Wien Library

Anchorage - Tuesday, March 9

Loussac Library

Glennallen area - Thursday, March 11

Gulkana Village Hall

Two meetings will be held at each location, preceded by a one-hour open house. Open houses begin at 2 pm and 5:30 pm.

If you want to receive the newsletter, discuss the planning process, or request that the team meet individually with you or your organization while they are in Alaska, contact the Gulkana River Studies Team by calling 1-800-439-0410, or writing: P.O. Box 2372, Durango, CO 81302; or by visiting the website at: <http://www.gulkanariver.com>.

Alaskans get second chance to comment on new surface management regulations

BLM will be taking public comments at a second round of meetings throughout the country to help develop new surface management regulations. In Alaska the meeting will be held March 30 at the Carleson Center in Fairbanks, 1 pm to 4 pm, and 7 pm to 10 pm.



KJ Mushovic

One way to stay warm

The pungent aroma of burning spruce wafted over the Bureau of Land Management's Glennallen Field Office throughout the fall and early winter.

Until the weather got too cold, daylight too short, and the snow too deep, members of the Tazlina

Hotshot crew "kept the home fires burning" as they worked on a fire fuels reduction project around the Glennallen Field Office compound.

Crew leader Roy Tansy and about six hotshots thinned out trees less than six inches in diameter at the base, and those dying or in poor form. They also removed fuel ladders (small lower branches) from larger trees. The crew finished thinning about 21 acres, burning the slash as they

went.

"It looked like a Roman camp out there, with the hotshots working around bonfires in the snow," laughs John Rego, who serves as the fire management's officer for the Glennallen Field Office. "Like Hannibal preparing to cross the Alps!"

Thinning will resume in the spring, when the next phase of the project includes removal of hazardous trees from around the field office buildings. Natural resource specialist Mike Sondergaard, who wears both forester and safety officer hats for the Glennallen Field Office, planned the effort and is monitoring the progress. "We're pleased with the work the hotshots have done for us," says Sondergaard.

—KJ Mushovic

Members of the Tazlina Hotshots fire-fighting crew oversee the burning of natural "fuels" — dead or dying trees and other brush that can fuel a forest fire.



KJ Mushovic

Iditarod champion musher Buser wins Copper Basin 300 sled dog race



KJ Mushovic

After coming in second in EVERY Copper Basin 300 sled dog race, Iditarod champion musher Martin Buser grabbed first place in the tenth annual event in early January. It took Buser just a little over three days to complete the 300-mile race. Buser is shown here soon after leaving the starting chute just outside Glennallen.

Volunteers needed!



Like people?

Beautiful Alaska scenery? Looking for a great place to spend this summer? Consider volunteering as a campground host at one of BLM's Copper River Valley campgrounds. Hosts can be provided with a free campsite and have various expenses reimbursed.

For more information and locations, write to: Marcia Butorac, Outdoor recreation planner, Glennallen Field Office, Box 147, Glennallen, Alaska 99588, or call (907) 822-3217. Or e-mail: mbutorac@ak.blm.gov. Visit BLM-Alaska's volunteer website at: www.anchorage.blm.gov/voluntr.html or call state-wide volunteer coordinator Don Pino at (907) 267-1231.

Editor: Janet S. Malone

Photos/graphics:

Stan Bloom

Dan Gullickson

Jerry Kouzes

Dwayne Richardson

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